

THE
DOCTRINES
OF THE
CHURCH OF ROME
EXAMINED.

Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her
sins. Rev. xviii. 4.

BY THE
REV. BRYAN FANSON BROMWICH, A. M.

LONDON:

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MDCCXCVII.

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Rev. Mr. J. J. J.

1609/3124.

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MDCCLXXVII

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clear and concise view.

P R E F A C E.

ON my first visit to the continent of Europe, I was so forcibly struck with the fatal tendency of the doctrines of Popery, that I was determined, should providence allow me leisure in my native country, to attempt to expose its errors. True it is, that there is not wanting, among the excellent writings of our clergy, full confutation on this subject; but their remarks for the most part are scattered through many volumes, which entirely excludes them from the generality of readers, who have perhaps neither leisure nor opportunity to peruse voluminous works. My

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intention therefore in this little volume is to bring the whole of this subject into a clear and comprehensive view.

I have taken this task upon me the more willingly, not only as it is the duty of every clergyman to expose error, but more especially being convinced, in my own mind, that the pernicious doctrines of the Church of Rome are the chief and principal cause of the infidelity that overwhelms the Christian world.

As that church has unhappily withheld the sacred writings, not only from the people in general, but in a great measure from the clergy themselves, so have they in proportion degenerated into absurd and licentious practices. For when men have not the Scriptures to consult, but are deprived of the inestimable knowledge on which their religion is founded, they can only know what the priest is pleased to teach them; and these are generally sufficiently

ciently instructed merely to say the mass.
But as the people perceive that their religion stands in need of false miracles* to support it, which the priests are perpetually

* The author mentions the following miracles, out of hundreds, merely as the first that occur to his mind; in order to show that such miserable legerdemain must greatly promote Atheism, Deism, and Infidelity, among the Papists, who are not permitted to read the Scriptures, and judge for themselves: what must they think of priests and religion? Priests who can fabricate such pious frauds? And the religion that wants such assistance; and so truly ridiculous?

In the neighbourhood of Leghorn, there is a mountain called Mouhtenorio, on the summit of which stands a magnificent church, that contains a picture of the Virgin Mary, painted by St. Luke. Before this church existed, the picture resided very comfortably at Jerusalem; but, meeting with some insult from the Turks, it took the resolution of leaving Holy Land. How it got to the sea we are not told, but it came swimming to Italy in the shape of a stone; and with all the skill of an experienced pilot, it doubled the southern point, tacked north about, and made for Tuscany. Arriving in the neighbourhood of Leghorn, after resting a little on the sands, it happened

ally playing before them, the far greater part can hardly imagine that such a religion

a shepherd was passing by. The stone immediately called to the shepherd to take it up; but, hearing a voice and seeing nobody, he wondered with very great wonder! When the stone had repeated its request, the shepherd obeyed, who was ordered to take it on his shoulder, and carry it to the top of Montenario: the shepherd did it with much difficulty, the stone being heavy, and the mountain high and steep. When they arrived at the summit, the stone again broke silence, and ordered the shepherd to put it down, which he had no sooner done than the stone resumed its original form of a picture of the Virgin. After this it told the shepherd the particulars of its voyage, with the reason of its leaving Holy Land, ordering him to proceed immediately to the bishop's palace, and relate what he had seen and heard. The bishops, with many priests, repaired directly to the mountain, and were convinced of the miracle. A church was immediately erected, to keep this precious picture in safety; and it has been an annual custom ever since, to carry it in great pomp through the town of Leghorn, attended by the bishops and clergy, with the grand duke and all his court in grand gala: the houses on that day are illuminated, and great rejoicing is made among the pious.

Another

gion is from God; and, whilst they view their miracles with contempt, detestation, and abhorrence, conclude the whole Christian doctrine to be a forgery. That this is the real fact, I appeal to those who have resided the least, either in France, Italy, or Spain; where for every Atheist,

Another miracle was annually played off at Marseilles. On Easter-Sunday morning, in the year 1783, being at that city, I was suddenly alarmed by the ringing of all the bells in the churches; at the same time the guns of the fort and castle kept an incessant firing. Supposing the town was surprized and attacked by some enemy, I made all haste to learn some intelligence of what was the matter. But how great was my surprize to hear that all this was done, to express the extreme joy of the inhabitants that their bells were just then returned safe from Rome! It seems these bells were accustomed like birds of passage, to take flight to Rome to receive the Pope's blessing: they always took flight in the Lent themselves, and without assistance from the several steeples where they used to hang; on Easter morning they would always return, each go to his own church, hang themselves up, and then set on to ring, to give the inhabitants intelligence of their return: as soon as this ringing was heard, the guns immediately were fired by way of salute.

or Deist, that may be found in Great Britain, thousands may be counted on the Continent, where Popery is the established religion; and even those few in Great Britain, of that superficial character, have commonly imbibed their notions in their travels, before the truth was stamped on their minds.

That Popery is the cause of infidelity, is instanced in a remarkable manner by the writings of Voltaire. His works on the Continent were received with rapture, and almost universal applause; and his unjust sarcasms against Christianity were continually retailed by all ranks of people. In Great Britain his writings do little harm; whilst his wit is admired, the faith of Protestants, founded on the Scriptures, can seldom be hurt by such feeble superficial arguments, nor by the wit and buffoonery of such a philosopher, a title which posterity will never allow him.

This

This shews us the great necessity of studying the Holy Scriptures; as containing all necessary truths, as guarding men against all pernicious errors, as affording the strongest arguments to persuade sinners to amend, and as directing men in all virtuous practice: it is necessary to every Christian, but more especially so to every preacher of the Gospel.

And though we justly and properly condemn the errors of the Church of Rome, yet we ought not to hate the persons of Papists, nor uncharitably judge every private person, nor even every priest among them to have that malignity of spirit on which their church is founded; much less ought we to offer them any injury, violence, or wrong. On the contrary, we ought to endeavour to convince them of their errors, by strength of reason, and gentleness of behaviour. If a man's practice be vicious and injurious to his fellow-creatures, the religion he professes

esses will little avail him: for, what can it signify, in point of religion, to detest the cruelties of Papists, if men still continue cruel? The religion of Christ consists, in the worship, and love, and imitation of God, and in universal charity to men. If we depart from this principle, we depart from our profession,

Though the following pages can at no time be improper to be read, in which the errors of the church of Rome are examined; yet at this time it may be the more necessary, from the unusual number of Papists that reside among us; and, should they have the good fortune to fall into the hands of any of that deluded sect, the author hopes it may be the means of exciting them to examine the truth of what is written, and compare it with the sacred text: they will then see in what a perilous case they stand; who are blindly, as St. Paul says, *teaching men to give heed— to doctrines of Devils.* And with all humility

military he admonishes the superiors of this unaccountable sect, no longer to withhold the means of knowledge from their people, by prohibiting them to read any books in which their errors are exposed.

PAID BY THE POST

may be supplied the holders of this
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hold the money which is the
people by the
any books in which they are
found.



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THE
DOCTRINES
OF THE
CHURCH OF ROME
EXAMINED,

FIRST ERROR.
OF THE CATHOLIC OR UNIVERSAL
CHURCH.

THE sacred name of God's Church, in the Scripture sense of it, has been made such abuse of by the Church of Rome, to serve the purposes of tyranny, ambition, and cruelty, that, for ages, the very idea of it was in a manner destroyed
amongst

amongst European nations, though our Saviour has so expressly declared, that *his kingdom was not to be of this world.*

Though the word Catholic signifies in general the Universal Church, yet it must not always be taken in so large a sense.

Catholic Church sometimes means, in the greatest sense, the whole number of those who shall obtain salvation. Rev. vii. 9. *I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne.* Good men, who, in all ages, and in all nations, have kept God's commandments, from the beginning of the world: all those who have separated from the idolatrous nations, these, our Saviour declares, shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. Mat. viii. 11. *For, God is no respecter of persons.* This is that church which Christ loved and gave himself for, that he might present it faultless before the throne of God.



In

In the next place, it signifies the Christian Church only; that church which Christ has promised to be always with, and to preserve it, that the *gates of hell* shall never prevail against; that Church which, though opposed by infidelity, and persecuted by ignorance, by imposition, and worldly power, yet shall at length prevail, so that *the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord; and the knowledge of God shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea; and the everlasting Gospel shall be preached to all nations.*

It also, and very often, means that part of Christ's Church which is now living; the present true Christians, wherever they are, or by whatever name they are called, in all the earth. It is the Invisible Church, known alone to God, the searcher of hearts, who among Christians of all nations, and of different rites and ceremonies, and forms of government, alone knows who they are that worship him in spirit and in truth. This, in the sight of God, is the only true church, undistinguishable by man, but known to God alone.

But, most frequently of all, it signifies that part of the Christian Church which is now visible on earth,

earth, and which, in our present imperfect state, we are obliged to speak of, as if the visible and invisible church were one and the same body of men. It is the great field wherein grows the corn and the tares; the net in which are inclosed both good fish and bad; it is the mixed society of Christians and Hypocrites, that will not be separated till the day of judgement.

Now the Church of Rome pretends to be this whole Catholic Church, and proves it by these marks:

First, Visibility.

Secondly, Universality.

Thirdly, Antiquity.

Fourthly, Miracles.

By Visibility, they mean temporal grandeur, founded on worldly power. Now, most unfortunately for Popery, the Scripture makes this one great mark of Antichrist, compelling by force of persecution all the world to worship him.

By

By Universality, they mean a large extent of country; forgetting that Mahometanism and Paganism are both superior in this respect to Popery; the former extending over the vast Turkish and Persian empires, and a great part of India and Africa; the latter, perhaps, is still more so, being established through the empires of China and Japan, a part of Russia, America, and almost throughout the vast continent of Africa. However, judging of truth by numbers is very different from our Saviour's opinion, for he tells us, *that wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.*

By Antiquity, they cannot mean the primitive antiquity of Christ and his Apostles; their doctrine is very different from that of Popery; but only several past corrupt ages, in regard to us indeed antient, but with respect to the Scriptures very late innovations.

Miracles were indeed the certain evidences of our Saviour's divine commission, and of his Apostles after him; but miraculous powers extended no farther than to their persons. When the Christian doctrine was established, it does not seem
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consistent with the ways of Providence that miracles should continue; indeed, there are strong reasons for the contrary; therefore those miracles that are said to be worked immediately after the Apostles' time we may very justly doubt of. As to the Miracles and pious frauds which began in the fourth century, about the time of St. Anthony the Monk, and have continually increased ever since among the Papists, the character the Scripture gives of them is this; 2 Thess. ii. 8. *Then shall that wicked one be revealed whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, because they received not the love of the truth: for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.*

Every thing of this sort is fraud and deceit. The only mark of the true Church is adhering to the plain, uncorrupted doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, as delivered to us in their own writings. Where this is done there is the true Church, even though but two or three be gathered together; and where this is not done there is no true Church, though it were as universal as the whole world.

The Pope, therefore, and all his followers, have, like the Jews of old, by the traditions of men,

men, made void the commandments of God, and are thereby become, 2 Theff. ii. 3. that *man of sin* sitting blasphemously in the seat of God, and changing laws and times, and commanding all men to worship his temporal power.

The true authority of the Church of Christ is to be a witness and keeper of the Sacred Writings, to hand them down uncorrupted from age to age, as the only rule of faith and manners; *for, if any man shall add to these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in his book; and, if any man shall take away therefrom, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life.* In forms and ceremonies, of which we have no directions, only that all things be done decently and in order, the authority of man properly takes place. In these things every good man will willingly comply with the laws and customs of the government he lives under, always remembering, in regard to things indifferent, they who make divisions in the Church, either by needless separation, or obstinately giving to others any occasion of separation, are, on both sides, equally guilty of schism; for, thus St. Paul admonishes, Rom. xvi. 17. *Mark them which cause divisions and offences; the fault being equal, to those who cause divisions, as to them who divide.*

The Unity or Communion which ought to be between those who compose the true Catholic Church consists in this; that, with universal love and charity, they assist, instruct, comfort, reprove, forgive one another; and, though there may be difference of opinion in smaller matters, perform all acts of goodness to each other. *If one member suffer, all the members should by compassion suffer with it*, 1 Cor. xii. 25. This is the true unity of Christians; for he that saith, he loves God, and loveth not his brother, St. John says, is a liar. With vice only we are to have no charity; for what communion hath light with darkness? Beyond this we have no authority to go, lest by a mistaken zeal *we pluck up the wheat with the tares.*

As to the infallibility of the Church of Rome, or the Pope, or the infallibility of fallible man, it is of the same nature with the infallibility of some of our illiterate mechanics, who, leaving their tools to become doctors in the tabernacle, crying aloud and sparing not, after a medley of enthusiastic, unintelligible nonsense, assure their audience that they are inspired, or that the Lord puts it in their heads. Now, all people of this description would do well to consider this expression

sion of our Saviour, Matt. xii. 32. *Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.* Now, if any one, falsely and blasphemously, in order to answer some private purpose of his own, pretends that what he says be the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit; if all lies, delusions, and pious frauds, pretending to be worked by him, to deceive the weak and ignorant, be not blaspheming against him, it will be difficult to imagine what is.

There seems to be but two ways in which men now can be guilty of this great and unpardonable offence. The first is by denying the Sacred Writings to be from divine inspiration. Whosoever resists this great conviction, by unreasonable pride and obstinate malice, to such men God will never afford any farther means of conviction; therefore, though all other blasphemies may be forgiven, yet he, who is guilty of this total corruption of mind, this desperate rejecting of the greatest and highest conviction that God vouchsafes to afford men, shall never have forgiveness. The other seems to be when men, for some pri-

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vate purpose, wishing to establish doctrines of their own invention, and then blasphemously pretend that what they speak is from the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God; men who dare to be guilty of such crimes against the Majesty of Heaven seem to be incorrigible; John x. 26. *Ye are none of my sheep, ye shall die in your sins; which is equivalent to, Ye shall never be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*

SECOND

SECOND ERROR.

OF THE POPE, OR BISHOP OF ROME.

THE very high power this bishop claims, as the head, disposer, and sovereign of the whole world, both in temporal * and spiritual affairs,

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* However modern Papists may seem to deny the Pope's supremacy in temporal affairs, the united testimony of all European nations too firmly establishes the fact, to admit of the least doubt, that wherever they had the power, they were never backward in assuming it. Indeed, what they affirm, or what they deny, can be of no weight against historical facts; especially when we know that the most solemn oath of a Papist is no longer binding to him, than his church shall think proper; and it is a melancholy truth, that a real Papist will stick at no crime, however inhuman, to support his erroneous religion: out of a thousand other facts, we need only call to mind the horrid massacres of the Protestants, and the numberless human victims burnt and burning at their inquisitions. It is contrary to common

is founded on this expreffion of our Saviour, *Mat. xvi. 18. And I fay unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell fhall not prevail againft it.* The Papifts fay, that as St. Peter was the firft bifhop of Rome, therefore the Popes, his immediate fucceffors, muft undoubtedly continue to be the rock on which the Church of Chrift is built. Whether St. Peter was ever at Rome, as with fome has been a matter of doubt, we cannot deny there is no mention of it in Scripture; but that he was ever appointed bifhop there is very improbable. His ardour in propagating the Chriftian doctrines, would hardly admit of his

fenfe and reason, to fuppose for a moment, that modern Papifts hold a different faith from their ancestors, fo long as they believe in the infallibility of their Pope, and that a man, often a moft infamous one, as many of their Popes have been, can, inftead of God, forgive them their fins; and who, themfelves, ftand fo much in need of pardon. Where it is poffible that an infatuated fet of people can have the folly or madnefs to believe that a man, like themfelves, can have the power to act as God, is it poffible to fuppose fuch people would dare to difobey that man's commands? Moft certainly not; and, if the pope was to want another Guy Faux to blow up the Britifh Parliament, for the glory of God, and the increafe of Popery, there would be found no fcarcity of them to attempt it.

long

long residence in any one place: but were it an established fact, the verse in question will nothing support the arrogant pretensions of the Popes of Rome.

The expressions and figures of speech used in the Scriptures, well known at the time, as modern forms of speaking are to us, cannot always be understood, except by those who are perfectly acquainted with the original language: unless this be the case, there is nothing so absurd but what may be proved by particular scraps of Scripture.

Our Saviour, to get a distinct answer from his Disciples, how far they understood him, asks them, Mat. xvi. 13. *Whom do men say that I am?* They answered, *Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets.* He saith unto them, *but whom say ye that I am?* Simon Peter answered, *thou art Christ the son of the living God.* Then said Jesus unto him, *blessed art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven.* The meaning is, the answer you have made is not merely conjecture, as the Jews had guessed him to be either Elias, or John the

Baptist, or one of the Prophets risen from the dead; but the very truth which God has enabled you to discover. *And I say unto thee that thou art Peter* (which signifies a Rock), a firm unshaken professor of the truth: such significant names are very usual in Scripture. Thus, Gen. xvii. 5. *Thy name shall be Abraham*, that is, a father of many nations. Again, xxxii. 28. *Thy name shall be called Israel*; for 'as a prince hast thou power with God and with man, and hast prevailed. So likewise thou Simon, the son of Jonah, shalt in future be called Peter; *thou art Peter* (a Rock), a firm and constant, a faithful witness, and a defender of the truth. *And upon this rock*, upon this steadiness of yours in preaching the great truths of the Gospel, *will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.*

As God was pleased to appoint Jerusalem for the seat of his worship, it was by way of eminence called *the city of the great king, the holy city*; and, in the prophetic language, a type of heaven. From hence, in the New Testament, the state of
 heaven

heaven is figuratively called, *Jerusalem which is above*, Gal. iv. 26. *Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem*, Heb. xii, 22. According to the same similitude, the Church of God, even on earth, is called the city, the temple, and the House of God.

Now, as the Church of God is represented in Scripture under the figurative idea of a holy city, a temple, or House of God ; so the several parts are also described under the like modes of speech. Thus the word *foundation*, as meaning a chief part, is elegantly used to express such men or things, such persons or doctrines, on which religion chiefly depends. Thus, Eph. ii. 20. *Ye are built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets*; and Rev. xxi. 14. *The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the name of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner stone.* The Apostles and the Prophets are the foundation ; and the church, that is, good men in all ages, are the whole building, or spiritual temple of God.

From observing the meaning and nature of these figures of speech, which are often used in Scripture, and with great propriety and elegance,
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in describing the Church of Christ; it becomes easy to understand the true sense of our Saviour's words, *Thou art Peter; and upon this rock will I build my church.* The church is the city or temple of God. In this spiritual building, Jesus Christ himself is the chief *corner stone*, in whom the whole building is fitly framed together. The Apostles and Prophets are the foundation. Amongst these, St. Peter, having, with peculiar zeal, made confession of his believing Christ to be the Messias, was approved by his master, who answers him thus: By thy firmness, courage, and constancy, thou shalt become a distinguished founder of my church, a most successful preacher of my doctrine to the world, *Thou art Peter (that is, thou art a rock); and upon this rock I will build my church.*

*And the gates of hell * shall not prevail against it.* That is, no opposition, no persecution, even to

* The word hell, in our translation, does not in the original Greek mean the state of the damned, but that invisible state to which death is the gate or passage. The word in the Greek is *Ades*. Now that which means hell, as the place of the damned, is always expressed by the word *Geënnā*. This expression is similar to these in the Old Testament: *gates of the grave, the chambers of death, and the gates of death.*

death

death itself, shall stop the progress of my Gospel.

I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose in earth, shall be loosed in heaven; that is, thou shalt first open the kingdom of the Messias, and make the first publication of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, which we find was fulfilled, in the 2d, 10th, and 15th, chapters of the Acts. And by the terms of that doctrine, which I commission you to preach on earth, shall every man's sentence be determined of God in heaven.

Whether by the *rock*, on which our Saviour here promises to build his church, be meant the confession or the person of St. Peter, as some Protestants and Papists have contended about, it makes no difference at all as to the true sense of the words; they being applied in so particular a manner to his firmness and steadiness in that confession; so that nothing can be collected to the advantage of that impious and blasphemous doctrine of the Church of Rome; the Pope assuming the power of the Almighty, the only searcher of hearts,

hearts, deceiving the weak and ignorant, pretending to forgive men their sins, or loading them with curses; and to have power to transfer the same authority to myriads of priests, some of whom the most abandoned of mankind, and, if we may credit the testimony of all ages, and our own senses, often the most ignorant and infamous.

Our Saviour, with a view, perhaps, to guard us against such an impious and extravagant opinion, and which he foresaw would happen for the purposes of tyranny and worldly power, takes occasion soon after to rebuke St. Peter, with more severity than ever he used to any of his Disciples. Mat. xvi. 23. *Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.* And probably for the same reason he was suffered to fall and deny his master, more shamefully than any of the other disciples. For the like reason, perhaps, was his speaking, with so little respect, of the blessed Virgin: *Woman, what have I to do with thee? Who is my mother? Behold, whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother;* knowing that

that she would from Papists receive those divine honours, which are due to God alone.

Moreover, what is said to St. Peter is elsewhere applied to all the Apostles; and our Saviour charges them, that there should be no preeminence among them, Mat. xx. 27. *Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant.* And what is spoken to St. Peter having the keys of heaven, is elsewhere directed to all the Apostles; John xx. 23. *Whosoever sins YE remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins YE retain they are retained.* The meaning of these sublime expressions is not even that the Apostles themselves (who were men, and therefore incompetent to judge the secrets of men's hearts, as God; much less that any of their infamous and degenerate successors) had a discretionary power of forgiving or retaining men's sins: they were appointed preachers and messengers of the Gospel, according to the terms of whereof God will either forgive men their sins or not. St. Paul gives us the true sense of this trust with great exactness, Rom. ii. 16. *In the day, says he, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel.* Here is no mention of St. Peter sitting as judge, much less of any Popes of Rome;

and surely there cannot be a greater impiety, than that of man assuming the authority of God, nor a greater folly than that of man believing it.

To any person who has the least knowledge of historical facts, the following remarkable description must appear, says the celebrated Dr. Clarke*, either intended to be a prediction of the tyranny of Popery, in its most flourishing times, or at least as exact and complete a picture of it as could possibly have been drawn even after the event. Oppressive powers there have been many in the world, both great and lasting; but this has been, after a most remarkable and wonderful manner, different from all other powers which have oppressed mankind, Dan. vii. 23. *It shall be diverse from all kingdoms.*

The prophet *Daniel*, speaking of an extraordinary power that was to come, describes it in these words:

* Dr. Samuel Clarke, whose extensive knowledge of the Scriptures, exemplary piety, and whose vast and comprehensive mind, has perhaps never been equalled in the history of mankind; and to whose most useful writings the author acknowledges himself greatly indebted.

He

He shall make war with the Saints, and prevail against them; and he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the Saints, and think to change times and laws. He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God, for he shall magnify himself above all, and shall divide the land for gain.

From the following description, St. Paul evidently sets forth a man of sin to be revealed:

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped: so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God; whose power is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and LYING wonders. Teaching men to give heed to doctrines of Devils; FORBIDDING to MARRY, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath commanded to be received with thanksgiving.

The same tyrannical power is evidently meant by St. John, when he prophesies of a wild beast:

To whom was given great authority, and a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and it was given unto him to make war with the Saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindred,

kindreds, and tongues, and nations; and all that dwell on the earth shall worship him. And he doth great wonders, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth. And the kings of the earth have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast; for God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to give their kingdoms unto the beast, until the words of God be fulfilled. The name of the person, in whose hands the exercise of this power is lodged, is Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots, the Abominations of the Earth; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, that is, have been led into Idolatry, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication; and by her sorceries are all nations deceived, and in her is found the blood of Prophets, and of Saints, and of all that are slain upon the earth. And this person, to whom these characters belong, is that great city, Rev. xvii. 18. Standing upon seven mountains, ver. 9. which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*

One reason of this prophecy being given is very clear; to give men warning, and to caution them, that they neither fall, if possible, under the

* Rome is built on seven hills.

tyranny and oppression of this dreadful power, nor have any share in exercising it over others; and if this prophecy be not a prediction of Popery, and already accomplished, it is not possible to conceive that it can ever be fulfilled; for, as the Church of Rome owed its power over the nations, to the extreme ignorance that pervaded all ranks of people; therefore, since the invention of printing, knowledge and learning are so happily and extensively diffused over the face of the earth, such a tyranny and total ignorance can hardly happen a second time; a tyranny so diverse from all tyrannies that have ever existed.

THIRD ERROR. OF GENERAL COUNCILS AND TRADITIONS.

FROM a false interpretation of an expression of St. Peter, the Church of Rome has most ridiculously attempted to prove, *That no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.* The words are, 2 Pet. i. 19. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place; knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation;* but the words in the original Greek are very different; they are, *No prophecy of the Scriptures is of the person's own private utterance;* it is not the mere thought or conception of the writer's own mind; *for the prophecy came not by the will of man, but holy men spake as they*

they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And St. Paul says, 2 Tim. iii. 16. All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

The will of God can only be made known to man by *two* ways ; these are Reason and Revelation. Reason is the only rule of things that are to be judged of by Reason ; and Scripture is the only rule of things which are to be judged of by Scripture ; otherwise both Reason and Scripture would be useless, and even hurtful to the greater part of mankind ; for, if a man was not to be guided by his reason, but by some other guide, all the use his reason could be to him would be to confound the directions of that other guide : so, if a man was not to be directed by the words of Scripture itself, but by some other instructor, Scripture then could be no of use to him, but only an impediment to him in obeying that other instructor. Certainly the *degrees* of reason in men are very different ; and often what a man's reason does not enable him to comprehend may easily be made clear to him by another of superior understanding ; and, when made clear to him, it is then as much his own as if he had discovered it himself.

self, and is as truly an act of his own reason; but if he was bound by another's authority to judge that to be reasonable which, after the utmost explanation, he could not perceive to be so, he would manifestly be bound to an impossibility: so, if any person was bound, by the mere authority of another, to perceive any thing to be commanded in Scripture as a condition of salvation, which, after all the proof which that person was able to give, he could not perceive to be there commanded, it would follow, that he was obliged to two contradictory things at once. When, therefore, we say, with St. Paul, that the Scripture is a sufficient rule both of faith and practice, the meaning is not, that the world stands in no need of living instructors, but that the Scriptures do so clearly express all the things which are therein declared to be the conditions of salvation, that persons of the meanest capacities, when shewn them, can clearly perceive, that they are indeed declared by Christ and his Apostles to be conditions of salvation. Beyond this, if it were needful for Christians to be persuaded, that there are still other things appointed by Christ as terms of salvation, which not only they themselves are not able to discover, but even after they are taught them can yet by no means perceive to be com-

commanded in Scripture ; if Christians were to be persuaded of any such things, the only use of it would be either to confirm them in confident ignorance, or to promote the practice of some wickedness.

The Church of Rome asserts, that, as the Scriptures themselves were conveyed to us by *Tradition*, therefore the same *Tradition* on which the Scriptures themselves depend must in other matters be as good a rule of faith as the Scriptures which are delivered down to us by that Tradition. This is their argument in its full strength.

Were there indeed any unwritten precepts of Christ delivered to us by the same Tradition as the written ones are ; that is, by the Apostles ; they would undoubtedly be of the same authority : but that the Church of Rome has any unwritten Traditions of this kind is both false and impossible ; for, unwritten doctrines, conveyed by verbal Tradition, every one knows, are unavoidably mistaken, changed, and lost, in every step of conveyance, not only from one generation, but even from one person to another ; but a written book may be delivered down from generation to generation ; and the history of every age, from that

time to this, and the citations of Scripture made in all times upon every occasion, both by friends and enemies, are evidences to the fact, that the Scriptures do contain the doctrine of Christ.

Another ground on which the Church of Rome denies the Scripture to be a sufficient rule of faith, is the difficulty of understanding its true meaning, that the generality of Christians are not capable to judge of it, and therefore they must needs depend on the judgement of others. If it were really so, there could be no such thing as Christianity at all; but religion would be merely the several laws and customs of the countries in which they prevailed. The truth is, the things that are declared in Scripture to be the terms of salvation are so clearly set forth in Holy Scripture, that it is impossible for any serious person not to understand them; no man, even of the meanest capacity, when these things are shewn and taught him, can possibly fail to see that they are really there. Whatsoever there is of so abstruse a nature (as some prophetic passages * in St. Paul's Epistles), that a person of

* In which *matters*, not in which epistles, St. Peter says, there are some things hard to be understood; to which latter sense it is often erroneously applied.

mean capacity cannot clearly comprehend, such a thing cannot be necessary to be understood by that person; nor can it be the duty of any sincere person to pretend to believe what he cannot understand, after carefully attending the best instruction. All things of this kind are what St. Paul calls unlearned questions.

The idea, that the generality of Christians are not capable of judging for themselves the doctrines of Scripture, was invented by the Church of Rome, for the purpose of establishing their wonderful and astonishing tyranny, and of which that was the principal support; but so far is this from being the truth, that there is an obligation on all persons, according to their several capacities, to study the Scriptures, especially those parts of them wherein are declared the terms and conditions of salvation. Our Saviour exhorts us, John v. 39. to *search the Scriptures*, as the means of discovering the truth of his doctrine. St. Luke commends the *Bereans* for *searching the Scriptures daily*, to see whether the things taught them were so or not. St. Paul commends Timothy for *having, from a child, known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make him wise unto salvation*; and, preaching to the Jews, his manner was, Acts xvii. 2. to *reason with them out of the Scriptures*; and

44 OF GENERAL COUNCILS AND TRADITION,

our Saviour, debating with the Sadducees, convinced them that they erred in not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God,

All Christians are to make the plain Scriptures their rule; and, by so doing, they may, even in the more difficult parts, find wherewith to enlarge their knowledge, and confirm their faith; but, if the decision of Councils, the Pope, and Traditions—in other words, the will and pleasure of the Court of Rome—are to supersede the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles; then the use of the Sacred Scriptures can only be, as they ever have been with that Church, to enslave people's minds to their gross errors.

FOURTH

FOURTH ERROR,

IDOLATRY,

WITH a duplicity of conduct which has ever swayed their minds, the Papists deny the worshipping of Idols, at the same time that they confess they shew a *certain honour* to the Image of Christ and his Saints, beyond what is due to every profane figure.

But, if this be not Idolatry, there then was never such a thing as Idolatry in the world; for, what *more* did, or could, any Idolaters ever do? No man of common understanding, among idolatrous nations, could ever suppose his Image or Picture a real God, or even to be alive, but merely a representation of the object of his worship. Thus the antient Greeks and Romans were Idolaters; they had images of their Gods and
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Goddeſſes in every place ; whiſt they always ſuppoſed the real deities to reſide in heaven. The ſame do the modern Romans and other Papiſts, the names of the Idols only changed ; and the ſame do all other idolatrous nations throughout the whole world : but, though perſons of ſuperior or even of common underſtanding and reflection amongſt Idolaters can never be ſuppoſed to think their Image a real God ; yet this is not always the caſe with the lower orders of mankind, by far the moſt numerous ; amongſt theſe the difference between the Idol or Picture and the Deity is ſeldom or ever thought of. In thoſe places where Popery prevails, the Images in the public ſtreets are often ſurrounded by kneeling devotees ; and prayers offered up to them, apparently, with the moſt ſincere devotion, eſpecially to any favourite ſaint. Such inſtances clearly ſhew, that vulgar minds do not diſtinguiſh between the Idol and what is meant to be repreſented by it, nor often the prieſt himſelf.

Idolatry is now among the Papiſts carried to as great an exceſs as ever it was among the antient idolatrous nations, the names only changed ; though infinitely more abominable, as it is contrary to an expreſs command of God himſelf and
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the religion they pretend to embrace. Exod. xx.

3. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven Image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.*

The Church of Rome has destroyed men's plain and natural notions of God and his worship, undermining and making unintelligible the very foundation of all religion. Many are the idolatrous objects of worship they have introduced; as the Elements in the Sacraments, and the Mother of Christ, whom (by a blasphemous ambiguity, peculiar to themselves) they call the Mother of God, as well as the Images, Pictures, and Statues representing her; *giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons*, doctrines concerning the spirits of saints departed, and of imaginary saints, who, so far from being saints, were wretches of the most abandoned and infamous lives, and of saints who never lived, nor ever had existence but in the imaginations of deluded men; invoking them as mediators and intercessors, as if invested with miraculous powers to protect men, cities, and nations, and as having a corrupt interest in the court of Heaven to screen their votaries, even the most abandoned sinners, from the sen-

tence of divine justice, to the utter subversion of all religion and virtue, and turning into ridicule the essential difference of good and evil, and the eternal laws of God and nature, which are more immovable than the foundations of heaven and earth; for, to dispense with morality, to indulge men with any equivalents instead of real virtue, is a power which even God himself has never claimed; and the doing of it would be to deny himself, 2 Tim. ii. 13. It would be a changing of his unchangeable nature, and making himself to be what he is not; yet the Pope, who dignifies himself with the title of the Vicar of Christ, has often claimed this power; and has blasphemously and impiously carried it so far as even solemnly to absolve men from the obligation of just and reasonable compacts, and those made and confirmed on solemn oaths, absolving men from their allegiance to their lawful sovereigns, merely sometimes to set wretches at liberty to be the infernal instruments of vengeance, Dan. ix. 36. *He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every God.* Rev. xiii. *And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God; that is, by turning religion itself into superstition and wickedness.*

The Papists, moreover, in all places where they have had power, have openly set themselves to destroy and extirpate, by all the diabolical methods of violence and cruelty, all who would not *fall down and worship the Images which they have set up.* They have *made war with the Saints, and prevailed against them, and worn them out.*

In all governments, where there are any remains of humanity, all laws concerning capital crimes are so framed, as that it may be more possible for a guilty person to escape than that an innocent one should suffer; in this kingdom of the Beast, on the contrary, *diverse from all kingdoms,* the principle is, that *millions,* not only of innocent persons, but even of the best and most virtuous men, ought rather to be punished and cruelly tortured above the worst of malefactors than that any of their false doctrines, however contrary to all sense, reason, and Scripture, should be examined whether they be true or not.

By false and lying Miracles have they imposed on, and deceived, the weak, the ignorant, and the credulous. By an innumerable string of artificial ways of making men very religious, without one spark of virtue or goodness, which in Scripture

ture are called Sorceries, have they drawn away the superstitious and devout. By establishing a political kingdom of religion over many nations, independent upon, and overawing, every government, yet strongly united within itself, and directed by his HOLINESS the Pope; by this have they gradually prevailed upon the *kings of the earth to have one mind, and to give up their kingdom, their power, and strength, unto the Beast.*

Among the many expedients used by them to supply the want of real virtue, or rather to profit by that superstition and ignorance they themselves have caused, the following are inconceivably ridiculous as well as impious. The Vicar of Christ, as he calls himself, who keeps the keys of the gates of Heaven, not only openly professes that gold will gain his favour, but insists upon it, that purchasing Indulgences is a certain method of obtaining eternal salvation. How the poor are to come off we are not told; but this is certain, that Monks, Friars, and Priests, an immense multitude, are scattered over the face of the earth, to vend this species of merchandise*, to supply the wants of the faithful.

* Since the decline of Popery, this traffic has not been so brisk as formerly; yet, among Papists, the efficacy of Indulgences is never doubted.

Another expedient is, to clothe a person, when at the point of death, in a Frier's habit or blanket, so that St. Peter may mistake him for one of that *pious fraternity*.

God has endued all men with reason and understanding, from the contemplation of his works, to discover the wisdom and glory of their Maker. The mind of man itself, when it considers only its own wonderful faculties, sufficiently discovers how great must be the Author of so admirable a workmanship. The Creator of a being then, endued with such excellent faculties as the mind of man is, cannot be like any picture*; neither can he be like gold, marble, or wood, carved by the art of man. And it is really astonishing, how any rational creature should think of doing honour to the Maker of all things, by attempting to represent him; or that things inanimate, the work of men's hands, should be thought of any use as means of worship. There is no other Image of God in this world but the mind of man, a mind endued with reason and true virtue.

* It is common in those countries where Popery prevails to represent God in Pictures. He is drawn as an old man, and generally adorned with a Pope's Tiara or Triple Crown.

St. Paul argues, that even the heathen world were blameable, and justly condemned, for not attaining, by reason only; to a right knowledge of God. If they, then, who had no immediate revelation from God, are said to be without excuse, how much more shall those who call themselves Christians, who, besides their natural reason, enjoy the benefit of the Gospel, be utterly inexcusable, if they continue ignorant of God, and of their duty to him? Disobeying his express commands, and paying divine honours to bits of wood and stone, and to images and pictures of men; who, when alive on earth, held such worship in the utmost detestation and abhorrence, as St. Paul and Barnabas did at Lystra, *Acts xiv. 13. Then the priest of Jupiter brought oxen and would have done sacrifice; which when Barnabas and Paul heard of, they rent their clothes; and ran in among the people, crying out, Sirs, why do ye these things? We are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God.*

FIFTH ERROR.

OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE Church of Rome, as if determined to be hostile to every divine command, has entirely changed and altered this holy institution.

St. Paul says, 1 Cor. xi. 23. *That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take; eat; this is my body; which is broken for you: This do in remembrance of me. And after the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

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The promises of the Gospel are almost all spiritual; but as we are not yet in a state of perfection, but only preparing for it, so the devotion of our minds must be excited and expressed by acts of religion. Our minds must be filled with a due reverence towards God, and must shew forth itself in proper acts of external worship. We are not confined to difficult forms; the only command is, that *all things be done decently and in order* *. Though the Papists have invented many Sacra-

* That is, there ought to be some difference between things sacred and prophane. Some, to shew their abhorrence of Popery, have run into the other extreme. Thus, whilst they receive the Holy Communion, they very improperly do it sitting down; and even this they don't think sufficient, but put their hats on also, as a marked contempt for order and common decency. This is the practice of the Calvinists in the Swiss Cantons.

However, it would be well if this was the worst they could be accused of. Their horrid and blasphemous doctrine of Predestination (as totally repugnant to the Scriptures as any of the absurdities of the Church of Rome) is attended with the most pernicious effects. It is offering violence to every attribute of a just God; it is contrary to reason, to Scripture, and to common sense; it also tends to exalt fanatics to blasphemous presumption, and to depress weak minds to all the horrors of despair; beside this, it inclines many, who

Sacraments, yet there are no more than two positive institutions in the Christian Church as necessary to salvation, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and these, so extremely significant, and the connection between the sign and the thing signified so evident, that they can hardly be called barely positive institutions. By the *one*, we are admitted into the Society of Christians; by the other, we are confirmed and established in that state, being made partakers of the benefit of the death and passion of Christ.

The words of our Saviour in this latter Sacrament are, *Do this in remembrance of Me*; that is, let it be a perpetual SOLEMN commemoration of my death and passion, and a continual occasion

who really think it a Scripture doctrine, to reject all revelation as false and absurd. Calvinism, therefore, like Popery, is the cause of Atheism, Deism, and Infidelity, and like that equally to be dreaded in all Christian states. The experience of ages teaches us, that the *priests* of Calvin are apt to forget that the Christian Priest should be the Minister of peace; that it is no part of their duty to harangue on political grievances, either real or pretended, to inflame the public mind against their rulers; that it is no part of the Doctrine of Christ, or his Apostles, to be ever fomenting, in *peaceable nations*, devastation, sedition, and open rebellion.

of your meditating upon the spiritual benefits purchased to you thereby. The mind of man is so powerfully affected by external objects, that to meditate on things remote from sense is one of the hardest parts of our duty, and the want of it one of the greatest occasions of sin: and because men are usually as unapt to remember, as they are at first slow to apprehend, things of a spiritual nature; God has therefore generally been pleased to assist us with the help of outward and sensible signs. Under the Mosaical institution, the Jews have several signs and positive rites appointed them, for the keeping up in their minds a continual remembrance of God's commands; the most remarkable, and which was a type of our sacramental remembrance of the death of Christ, is the feast of the Passover, appointed to commemorate the miraculous deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt.

The same method God has been pleased to make use of with Christians, by the institution of the Lord's Supper; inestimably the greatest blessing that was ever conferred on the sons of men. We are commanded frequently to partake of it, to remind us that our Saviour's life was a pattern

pattern of all virtue, and his death an evidence of God's hatred against sin. His life was so complete a pattern of pure religion; and his death so affectionate a persuasive to imitate that example; that whoever frequently meditates upon these things can neither readily err from the right way, for want of due instruction, nor faint for want of powerful motives to proceed in it. For, what temptation can prevail upon that person to sin against God, to run into any acts of debauchery or impiety, who by faith continually beholds our Lord shedding his most precious blood, to redeem him from that sin which he is now going to commit?

As our Saviour has thought fit to appoint no other memorial of his death and passion besides the feast of the sacrament, it is a great and unpardonable presumption, for men to imagine that they can improve the institution, or make it better, as the Papists have done. But, as they have departed from the simplicity and purity of the Christian worship, so have they, by the addition of human folly in the worship of God, proportionably corrupted men's manners.

And as our Saviour appointed this sacrament for a continual remembrance of his death and passion, it is a strange corruption to teach that the bread and wine, at the will of a priest, is absolutely changed into the *real* body and blood of Christ; and which the Church of Rome persists in, though contrary to Scripture, to reason, and to the irresistible evidence of our senses; and that the sacrament is a repetition, not a commemoration, of that expiatory sacrifice once offered upon the cross. Our Lord's command is, *Do this in remembrance of me*. Now, in the name of common sense, can the remembrance of any thing be the repetition of the thing to be remembered? Such a repeated offering up the real body and blood of Christ, if such a thing could be, would not be a commemorating the sacrifice once offered upon the cross, but obliterating the memory of it by offering new ones. *And then must Christ oft have suffered since the foundation of the world; whereas now once only in the end of the world has he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* Heb. ix. 25. The arguments drawn by the Church of Rome, from the figurative

rative expressions*, Christ's Body and Blood, and the Sacrament itself a sacrifice, are as absurd and contrary to common sense, as their practice of worshipping a piece of Bread for God is idolatrous and abominable.

After our Saviour has commanded his Disciples expressly to eat of this bread and drink of this cup, it is a most unjustifiable presumption in the Church of Rome to with-hold the cup from the people. St. Paul, in the plainest words that can be, declares it to be the people's duty to partake in *both* kinds; *As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*: and our Saviour's command to his Disciples was, *Drink ye, all, of this*, as well as, *Take, eat, this is my Body*. To this they have most assuredly replied, that those Disciples, to whom our Saviour

* Figurative expressions, neither in the Greek, or any Eastern language, are to be taken literally; and to assert such a thing betrays either extreme ignorance of such language, or wickedness in misinterpretation. Our Saviour in a figurative manner calls himself a *Way*, a *Vine*, and a *Doe*, and in the original these are very expressive and elegant; yet no one supposes that he was any of these things; nor would the former have ever been misinterpreted, had it not been for giving the priests a greater power over weak minds.

commanded to *drink* this, were all priests, and none of them laymen; but, whatever they were, it is evident that they were the very same persons to whom he gave the bread also; and then, by the same kind of reason, it will follow, that, if the people are denied the cup, they must be denied partaking of the Sacrament at all, which is the highest impiety.

Utterly contrary to the doctrines of our Saviour is the manner of the Papists multiplying forms and ceremonies without number, and especially in making Sacraments of their own invention, to amuse the people, and withdraw their attention from real virtue. Besides the only two Christian Sacraments, the Papists have invented these that follow:

First, Confirmation, which is only men's publicly ratifying their baptismal vows.

Secondly, Ordination, which is the solemn appointment of particular persons to the ministry.

Thirdly, Penance, instead of repentance and amendment of life.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Extreme unction; this is founded on a gross misinterpretation of a verse in St. James's epistle, concerning the sick being anointed with oil, and their disorder being cured miraculously.

Fifthly, Matrimony. Because St. Paul compares matrimony to the spiritual union between Christ and his Church, and calls that similitude a great mystery (which word *mystery* the translator of the Gospels into Latin ignorantly and most ridiculously renders a great Sacrament), hence marriage with the Church of Rome is another Sacrament.

Innumerable other inventions there are amongst them; by, which according to the prophecy of St. John, *he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth.*

The doctrine of Baptism, amongst the Papists, is also very impious and absurd. It is the spirit of the Christian Religion to lay as little stress as possible upon all, external rites, and to have the greatest regard to the moral qualifications of the mind. Now, the spirit of Popery is exactly the reverse;

reverse; no regard is paid to virtue and goodness in comparison with external ceremonies; and a man may be very religious with them, without one spark of virtue or goodness. They suppose that an infant, dying without baptism, cannot be saved; contrary to reason, and contrary to the express declaration of our Saviour himself, who tells us, that of such is the kingdom of God; that is, of such who are innocent as they are. Owing to this idea of the efficacy of baptism, thousands of the Americans were baptized before they were massacred by the Spaniards. Though there is no external rite more expressly commanded, yet, to shew us how much religion is judged of in the sight of God by the virtuous disposition of the heart more than the outward form, there are many instances in Scripture where the inward disposition has been accepted instead of it; but in no case where the ceremony has in any instance supplied the inward disposition, which is the Popish doctrine.

SIXTH ERROR.

FALSE MIRACLES.

THOUGH our Saviour was pleased to confirm his religion by miracles; and to shew his divine commiffion by doing things beyond the power of man to do, and gave this power to his Apostles for the same reason; yet for man falsely to pretend to such power is the highest impiety. To tell lies, and deceive for the benefit of religion, can never be necessary; nothing is more odious in the sight of God. God is truth, and his religion is truth; and men might as well undertake to make light darkness, or darkness light, as pretend to advance the truth of God by lies and pious frauds. By lies and false miracles have they

they given great occasion to the enemies * of God to blaspheme. For, whilst ill-designing men have pretended to advance the interests of religion by some indirect means, others by this means have been tempted to think the whole of it nothing but a fiction; and that religion itself cannot be

* From hence have arisen an immense multitude of Atheists and Deists in those countries where Popery is the established religion; and to this cause, and this chiefly, may be ascribed all those misfortunes that are now ravaging and desolating Europe. Strangers to the Scriptures, and the true doctrine of Christ, Papists only know their religion from the priest: and the number of pious frauds they are daily witness of make the greater part naturally conclude the whole to be a forgery. Long before the late troubles in France, the most impious sarcasms against every thing sacred were commonly used by the nobility and men of fortune; which being continually retailed among the inferior classes, the whole mass of people became totally corrupt; and this was certainly the real cause of the destruction of the French monarchy.

This ought to be a warning to all governments, and shew them of what importance it is into what hands they commit the government of the church, as the abilities and moral conduct of the inferior orders of the clergy depend much upon it. It shews us also that interest alone ought never to be the occasion of distributing rewards, as the internal peace of the kingdom greatly depends on the abilities and conduct of the officiating clergy.

founded

founded on truth, when its professors are obliged to protect it with lies.

That religion which has God for its author can never want the assistance of lies and lying miracles; *for, lying lips are an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. xii. 22. Both in the Old and New Testament, idols, and deceit of all kinds, in divine worship, are described as the greatest abominations in the sight of God; and are expressed under the name of lies and lying vanities. Thus, Rev. xxi. 8. *murderers, and whoremongers, and forcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.* God in Scripture is called *Truth*; and the devil a liar and the *father of lies*.

Most destructive of true religion are all those vain deceits of the Church of Rome; penances, pilgrimages, and all the medley of empty forms and pomps of devotion, which, instead of being any real satisfaction for past sins, do, on the contrary, tend to withdraw men's minds from a true spirit of piety, filling them with endless superstitions, and therefore rather provoking than appeasing the wrath of God.

In

In proportion as any doctrine tends to reconcile any vicious practice with the profession of religion, *making Christ the minister of sin*, in the same proportion is the doctrine detestable, and the teachers of it corrupt. What opinion then must be had of those who set themselves against the use of reason in matters of religion; contending for opinions of which they have no understanding; making the obedience of the Gospel to consist in such ceremonies, which is the easiest thing in the world for the wickedest and most worthless men to do? Of what dangerous consequence are those confessions to the priest, and formal absolutions, by which men may ever be doing penance without ever amending their lives; ever confessing their sins to the priest, who, *with a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies*, pretending to absolve them, and returning to the same sins again, *perversely turning the grace of God into wantonness, continuing in sin that grace may abound?* This is destroying and cutting up by the roots the very nature and necessity of virtue. It is the highest contempt and mockery of God, to turn his very mercy into an encouragement of disobedience. This is, instead of reforming the world, actually corrupting it, and literally making Christ the minister of sin.

SEVENTH

SEVENTH ERROR.

CELIBACY OF PRIESTS, &c.

KNOWLEDGE and learning of every kind, in the fifth and sixth centuries, became so obscured by monastic folly, and the conquests of barbarians, that in those ages the primitive doctrines of the Scriptures became entirely darkened by superstition, and but imperfectly understood. We cannot suppose the literary attainments of the clergy to be very great, when many of the bishops were unable to write their names. It was in these times of ignorance that the celibacy of priests was insisted on ; and that vast numbers of men and women, under the various denominations of monks, friars, and nuns, devoted their lives to celibacy, thinking to obtain heaven by neglecting all the duties of man, and becoming
idle

idle and useless on the earth, and literally unprofitable servants.

In addition to the received idea of greater sanctity being attached to the unmarried clergy, the ambition of the papal see * was the cause of its rapid celebrity. By this means, having the clergy in their power unbiassed by matrimonial connections, the Church of Rome gained an influence in every European state, far beyond the natural sovereigns; often deposing them, exciting others to make war against them, and trampling on the laws and liberties both of kings and subjects, exercising the most wanton and cruel tyranny in the name of God and religion.

* Pope Nicolas I. seeing the importance of celibacy among the clergy to the see of Rome, was the first who established it as a law, affirming it to be more pardonable to keep mistresses than to marry. A remarkable instance of this kind is related of him: a certain rector, being accused of the heinous crime of having a wife and children, was condemned to lose his rectory. The priest, however, soon made it appear that he was falsely accused; for, though he did not deny but that the children were his own, yet he proved that the woman was the wife of another man. Thus he saved his credit with the papal see, and had his rectory restored him.

Every

Every thing that militates against the laws of nature, whether it be expressly forbidden or not, must necessarily be criminal; and celibacy being evidently an unnatural state, unless good reason can be assigned by unmarried people, cannot be blameless. But since marriage is enforced by a divine law, we are not left to our own determination concerning it; it is one of the first that God was pleased to give mankind, and it obliges us to acknowledge the great wisdom and goodness of God, in making it at the beginning for the good of mankind. Whatever law has God for its author, we ought to respect, therefore we should honour marriage as a holy state; and avoid every thing that is contrary to so holy an institution, especially impurity, and all debauchery. Reason, as well as the divine command, clearly shews us, that to discourage marriage is counteracting the laws of nature as far as we are able; and that to prevent the increase of the human species, by a life of celibacy, is a crime of little less magnitude than destroying those that are already born. Celibacy, moreover, is the source of debauchery, impurity, and every species of abhorred crimes.

Most impious is the doctrine of the Church of Rome, to promote and encourage, by every possible

fible means, the celibacy of its votaries, priests, nuns, monks, and friers, an immense multitude, acting the part of Satan, the great enemy of mankind, by rendering and making miserable so large a part of the human species; and, under the false pretence of greater sanctity, enticing people to lead idle slothful lives, to the neglect of every social and active duty for which they were created.

St. Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, tells us, that it is the duty of the ministers of the Gospel to preach the pure Gospel, that they may save themselves and those that hear them; but that there should arise some, in the latter times, who should depart from the faith, *giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; forbidding to marry; to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving; for, every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused.* Moreover he says, a *bishop, or priest, ought to be the husband of one wife, having his children in subjection; that is, he ought not to follow the bad example of those who had more than one, nor to set so vicious an example as living a batchelor.*

EIGHTH

EIGHTH ERROR.

PURGATORY.

MOST of the Papal errors are founded on some particular scraps of Scripture, misinterpreted either from ignorance or wilfulness; but this doctrine of purgatory is an exception.

The idea of the Papists is, that there is a place in which souls are to be purged by fire from carnal impurities, before they are received into the heavenly mansions, unless they are reprieved by the prayers of the faithful or indulgences purchased of the Pope. Now, as this doctrine has proved a very profitable harvest to the Papal see, we may naturally conclude that it was invented for the same reason as Demetrius the silversmith at Ephesus was desirous to continue his trade of making shrines for the great goddess Diana,

Acts xix, 25, *Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.*

The Church of Rome has ever, from very early times, been grasping at any circumstance, however trifling, that either would extend their power, or afford them any pretence of shearing their flocks. On this principle is the doctrine of a purgatory founded, and has been formed on a fanciful idea of Gregory and Origen; who thought that the wicked, after being purified from sin, in a place of torment, would obtain mercy. But, as the Scripture is entirely silent on this head, it is absurd and ridiculous to place the whims of heated imaginations as of equal authority.

PERSECUTION FOR RELIGION.

But, though we ought to be zealous for the truth, yet there is such a thing as false as well as true zeal. True zeal is the virtue of a Christian; its object is the study of truth, and con-

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forming ourselves to the eternal rules of equity, and using all just and Christian means to prevail with others to do the same. False zeal, on the contrary, is a partial adhering to parties and factions; forcing men into some imagined truth, without considering whether it be true or not; and this is exactly the state of the Church of Rome. They have, by great superstition, brought themselves to think some of the worst of vices to be a part of religion itself, and their duty to God; *having their consciences seared, (as St. Paul says), as it were, with a hot iron, being dead in trespasses and sins*; greedy, ambitious, lovers of power and dominion. Whatever pretences they may make, whatever false appearances they may possibly even blind themselves withal, it is always passion and interest that lead them to violence. The fiercest persecutors of that church constantly profess, and some of them may really believe, that they are doing God good service, when they are burning heretics, and butchering his servants with the most inhuman cruelties. Yet the true spring and motive of these their proceedings is ambition and the love of power; and this is evident, because they are in no degree so diligent in reforming men's manners, nor so cruel in punishing the most enormous crimes, as they are in forcing
men,

men, often virtuous and good men, into their sect or party : but indeed this is a part of their character, given in Scripture, *to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.*

As there are few people but what are acquainted with the extreme savageness of the Popish priesthood, when they have had power to exercise it; it will be needless to repeat any of the past massacres of these cruel devotees. Some of our own first reformers were not wholly free from it, though as foreign to the mild doctrine of our Saviour as the difference is between light and darkness. It is remarkable, that persecution has often been carried on with greater cruelty in proportion as the doctrines to be established were obscure. Fierce contentions have often arisen about matters, the limited knowledge of man is incompetent to judge of. The only rule for Christians is, to believe what God has been pleased to reveal to us; what is not revealed, it is impious to pretend to have any knowledge about, and still more wicked to murder innocent people for not professing to believe what no mortal man can possibly have any idea of.

To pretend to a knowledge in heavenly things, beyond what is told us, is folly, or rather a species of madness. There have been, and still are, great disputes amongst Christians about the Trinity, yet without reason: whether the Son or Holy Spirit are equal, or inferior in power to the Father, are idle questions, that will neither increase our knowledge, nor improve our morals. What is the reason of man, that he should presume to judge of heavenly things *, where unassisted

* Whilst we are combating the errors of others, it would be very unfair not to acknowledge our own. The Athenasian creed is obnoxious to many very pious and learned men; it decides too peremptory in matters above our comprehension, and oversteps the limits of human wisdom. Also, the words "*and the Son*" in the Nicene creed, being an innovation, gives offence to many very learned men as a fanciful doctrine. These unfounded parts of our admirable Liturgy, because they are blots in so excellent a composition, ought by all means to be improved in the objectionable parts. Being indefensible, they give occasion to cavillers to triumph, after having seen these objections made by literary men; for, I believe, it is a rare case indeed, that a man of this description is a man of that critical sagacity as would enable him to see them of himself.

I will take this opportunity to mention another grievance of more pernicious consequence; the abominable simony that

sifted by revelation? Whatever our Saviour's power may be in respect to that of God the Father; we are sure of this, that with respect to us his power is very great; that he is our creator, our redeemer, and appointed to be our judge at the last day; John i, 1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word*

that is daily practised in purchasing ecclesiastical preferments. Our Saviour scourged the buyers and sellers out of his temple, the only act of severity he ever used; by admitting them in, we make the temple of God a den of thieves; and this is a great cause of laxity of morals and infidelity.

Another is admitting improper people to the ministry, especially to the episcopal dignity. A celebrated electioneering *gentleman* wished, a few years ago, to reward a man who had been serviceable to him in that way. He first attempted it in the excise, but the man was found totally unqualified. The gentleman hearing this addressed him as follows: "Canst thou read pretty well?" On being answered in the affirmative, he replies, "then I must make a parson of thee." He kept his word, and the man was ordained by the late bishop of ———, who has overwhelmed the country with such kind of curates; and as these sort of gentlemen will serve at an under rate, they commonly are employed before a man regularly bred. When the people see so little regard paid to the choice of the clergy by their bishops, it occasions a contempt for religion itself, and amongst many a total neglect of divine worship.

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was God. All things were made by him ; and without him was not anything made. Let us leave, therefore, the idle disputes of parties and factions, and endeavour to deserve the name of Christians : this we are sure will be of service to us, when parties, factions, and bigotry, shall be no more,

TENTH ERROR.

INTERCESSION OF SAINTS.

GOD, the supreme Author and Governor of all things, has no need of sinful man, nor any obligation upon him to deliver apostate creatures from that death, which is, by God's appointment, the *wages of sin*. Yet, being essentially good and merciful, he resolved to have pity upon all sinners as should, by real amendment of manners, become objects of compassion. At the same time, that the dignity of his laws might be vindicated against sin, he was pleased to appoint so great an expiation as the voluntary sufferings and death of his Son. This appointment, therefore, was foretold from the beginning of the world; first to Adam, then signified by the sacrifice of beasts; and afterwards more clearly revealed by the prophets, *the spirit of Christ, which was in them, constantly testifying beforehand the sufferings of*

of Christ and the glory that should follow. To accomplish these predictions our Saviour did, in the fulness of time, condescend to assume our nature. This was the accomplishment of the prophecies, and of that great *counsel and appointment of God*, that he should be made a sacrifice and expiation of sin; for, since God, in vindication of his laws, had thought fit to appoint, that *without shedding of blood* there should be no remission, and the *wages of sin was death*, it was necessary, whether we comprehend it or not, that he, who was to redeem transgressors from death, should *die himself*.

Some writers among the Papists have often represented, that *one drop of the blood of Christ* is sufficient to redeem the whole world, as if there were no absolute necessity that he should have *died at all*; but not the *blood*, but the *death* of Christ, is the expiation of sin; the expressions in Scripture, that we are redeemed by his *blood*, are only figurative, according to the usual manner of that language, and signify his death; and it shews the extreme folly and perverseness of the Church of Rome, who, if they had in their possession, as they vainly pretend, some of the real blood of his Saints, or even of Christ himself, yet there
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would not thence arise any benefit at all, or any indulgence to wicked practices.

It is contrary to Scripture and to reason to transfer the worship, due to God alone, to Saints, real and imaginary, to Relics, or to Images and Pictures, the works of men: neither is there any foundation for setting up any other mediator besides Christ alone. The Apostles never claimed or thought of any such thing. The earthly relations, and even the Mother of our Lord, were, in the whole history of the Gospel, constantly treated by him in such a manner as if to guard against the folly and wickedness which our Lord foresaw would happen. Matt. xii. 48. *Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And, stretching forth his hands towards his disciples, he said, Behold my mother and my brethren; for, whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, sister, and mother.* Papists, therefore, by setting up any other mediators in the place of Christ, do really deny the Lord, who bought them, and our Saviour himself, by the purchase of whose blood they were redeemed to God.

But, as the imaginary intercession of Saints will be of no service to the Papist, so, to any wicked man,

man, of what religion soever, will the mediation of Christ himself be of no avail; for, *not every one*, says our Saviour, *that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

ELEVENTH ERROR.

ENEMIES TO LEARNING AND LEARNED MEN.

THE Church of Rome is not only a principal cause of Infidelity and Corruption of Manners, but has ever been the most bitter enemy of Science and Learning; and, when the Popes of Rome were in their greatest prosperity, and the Tyrants of Europe, they gave a total check to the progress of science. Of one truth, however, they are, and were at all times, perfectly sensible,—that universal ignorance is their *best and only support*. Since the revival of letters, which the invention of printing has most providentially occasioned, Popery has been on a rapid decline, and will continue so to do till the words of St. John are fulfilled, Rev. xviii. 2. *Babylon the Great is fallen.*

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It would be needless to repeat a multitude of instances, where innocent and virtuous men have been the objects of Papal vengeance, or the unparalleled massacres of the Protestants, in order to stop the progress of knowledge, where not only men and women, but poor, innocent, infant children, were indiscriminately murdered by thousands. Such was the case at the Irish massacre, the massacre of the French Protestants, and what is called the Sicilian Vespers, so named from that being the signal when the holy priests were to commence their beloved employ, of destroying Heretics, and for which, at all times, they have shewn a great partiality.

Their implacable hatred to learning and learned men has frequently manifested itself with inveterate malignity. From a thousand instances I will select the treatment the learned and virtuous Galileo met with at Rome.

Galileo was the natural son of a nobleman of Florence, and published a System of Astronomy on the principles of the celebrated Copernicus. He also brought the telescope to such perfection that it enabled him to be the first discoverer of mountains in the Moon, the satellites of Jupiter,
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the various changes of Venus, with the spots of rotation of the Sun, and proving the analogy which is between the Earth and the other planets. Other very important discoveries are attributed to this excellent philosopher. Among other things, he discovered that the pendulum was a proper measurer of time; and from this idea it is evident that the celebrated Huygens first invented clocks in 1656. But to enlighten human nature was a crime of such magnitude with the Pope and his cardinals as was never to be forgiven; Galileo therefore was exposed to all the horrors of the *holy inquisition*. He was accused by an illiterate monk before that tribunal; and though, to save himself from torture, and in compliance with their ignorance, he abjured his *heresies*, as they termed it, yet this only gained him his life; he was condemned to prison for three years, and daily to repeat some of their religious compositions. He died, at the age of 78, in 1642.

The following is a copy of the decree of the inquisition, and is a curious specimen of barbarous pride, presuming to judge of things of which it is entirely ignorant.

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“To say the Sun is in the center, and without local motion, is an absurd doctrine, and false in good philosophy; it is heretical, and contrary to the Scriptures. To say that the Earth is not placed in the middle of the world immoveable, but that it has a diurnal motion, is also a false doctrine, and absurd in philosophy.”

The idea of the true system of the movement of the heavenly bodies being contrary to Scripture, is from the expression of Joshua, commanding the Sun to stand still; but, though Joshua was a favourite of Heaven, there was no necessity of his being an astronomer. Joshua was a warrior, and a great general, and spoke according to the common apprehensions of mankind, and probably his own; and there is no more reason to suppose that he should have known, by the immediate inspiration of Heaven, the real movement of the Earth round the Sun, than he should have known any of the other arts and sciences that have been of modern invention.

Many follies and errors of the Church of Rome I have entirely omitted, trusting that what I have already written is quite sufficient to convince those who have not examined the subject,

ject, that the religion of Popery is not that religion which was taught us by Christ and his Apostles, and which is contained in the Holy Scriptures; that Popery is a principal and chief cause of Infidelity; and that, so far from being Christian, it is directly contrary to it in almost every instance, and the enemy of virtue, knowledge, and goodness, amongst men.

THE END.

too, that the religion of Tiberius is not that religion
 which was taught us by Christ and his Apostles,
 and which is contained in the Holy Scriptures,
 and which is the foundation of all true religion,
 and the basis of all true Christianity.
 It is directly contrary to it in almost every in-
 stance, and the enemy of virtue, knowledge, and
 goodness, through which